

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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Chairman Cox Commends DHS Review: Consistent with Homeland Security Committee Initiatives

WASHINGTON (Thursday, July 14, 2005)—House Homeland Security Chairman Christopher Cox (R-CA) delivered the following opening statement at today's full Committee hearing on "The Secretary's Second-Stage Review: Re-thinking the Department of Homeland Security's Organization and Policy Direction" with Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff:

"One week ago today, terrorists committed the barbaric bombings in the London underground. That, and all of the terrorist acts that have stretched out from September 11, 2001 to today, provide the backdrop for this hearing.

"The changes that Secretary Chertoff is proposing in the organization and programs of the Department of Homeland Security all have as their focus achieving more effectively the overarching missions of the Department of Homeland Security: preventing terrorism, protecting our nation's critical infrastructure against terrorism, and responding to acts of terrorism when they occur.

"There have been many different modalities of terrorist attacks that we've witnessed since 9/11. Sometimes schools have been attacked; sometimes night clubs, restaurants; embassies; banks; subways; railroads; synagogues; and of course office buildings and the Pentagon on 9/11. The means of attack have varied as widely as the venues. The only constant has been the terrorists themselves.

"Preventing terrorism, therefore, requires that we have a constant focus on the terrorists themselves. And this, as this Committee has emphasized so often, requires the preeminence of the intelligence function in the Department of Homeland Security.

"I want to congratulate you, Mr. Secretary, for initiating the second-stage review of the structure, policies and programs of the Department. And I want to applaud your leadership in bringing prevention and intelligence to the fore. These are essential elements in what you're going to be describing to this Committee today.

"I also want to applaud your leadership in bringing a risk-based rigor to the Department of Homeland Security and to its management and operations. That has long been an objective of this Committee, and it's critical to driving integration of the Department's 22 legacy agencies.

“Risk-based management is also the key to ensuring that our efforts to enhance our national security do not, in the aggregate, result in trading away features of our constitutionally founded way of life.

“Mr. Secretary, you’ve recently stated that, ‘We don’t drive the mission and the outcome by the structure; we drive the structure and operation by the mission and the outcome.’ That is precisely correct.

“And your second-stage review generated constructive proposals that will help eliminate the bureaucratic stovepipes in the Department and sharpen the Department’s focus on its core counterterrorism mission.

“Your focus on the most consequential kinds of terrorism that America might someday face and on enhancing information sharing—within the Department, with state and local governments, and with other homeland security stakeholders—is absolutely right. And your proposed management and organizational reforms will move the Department significantly in the right direction.

“I’m pleased that many of your specific reform proposals are consistent with initiatives that this Committee has, on a bipartisan basis, advocated over more than two years.

“For example, this Committee has urgently stressed the importance of creating an Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity, as you proposed.

“The Committee recognized the need for an overarching, coordinated intelligence capability for the Department. We urged a view of the intelligence function within the Department that encompasses much more than support for the infrastructure protection mission. Your proposal properly separates intelligence from infrastructure protection, and then creates a Chief Intelligence Officer reporting directly to the Secretary.

“The Committee’s oversight and legislative efforts have focused on the need for the Department to improve operational coordination among its many legacy agencies performing similar or related functions. This will not only reduce waste and duplication but also avoid dangerous gaps that terrorists can and will exploit. You have taken this issue head on, as well.

“And, of course, making the Department’s choices about where to put homeland security technology and manpower, what to protect and how to prepare for terrorist acts -- making that all based on risk has been at the heart of what you have been saying and doing since you have become the Secretary of Homeland Security. It has also been at the very core of this Committee’s persistent efforts.

“I applaud your focus on preparedness and on the specific preparedness priorities of surface transportation security, aviation security, port security and border security. It is also important that, beyond preparedness, prevention remains the Department’s number one mission priority. And I am absolutely confident that, under your leadership, it will.

“I would urge consideration of one more innovation consistent with each of the structural reforms that you’ve outlined.

“The Department’s budget request should be organized by mission focus, from prevention to preparedness to response. That way, we will be better able to determine whether resource allocation reflect the overriding terrorism prevention priority that must drive the Department’s programmatic decisions.

“I congratulate you, Mr. Secretary, on a job well begun. And, in completing this ambitious top-to-bottom mission-based review of the Department’s structure, its programs and its activities, we wish you nothing but continued success.

“Now it is time to drive these reforms, which until now have been ideas on paper, into operating reality. And we stand ready, in this Committee, to help you in any way that we can.”

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